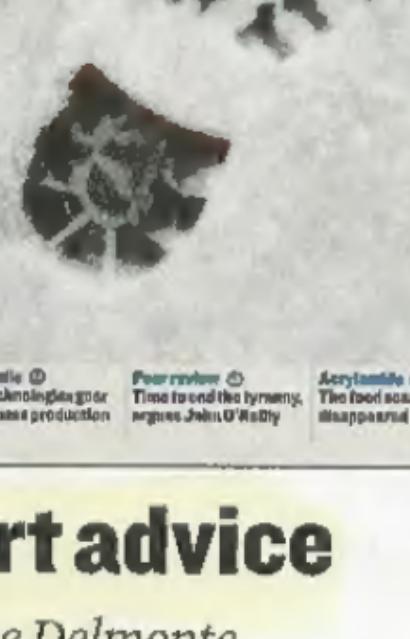


Letters

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Expert advice

From Clive Delmonte

Sir John O'Reilly's comment on peer review covers many pertinent points, but I feel there is a further crucial aspect to consider (*Chemistry World*, February 2007, p36).

The accepted paradigms in science are that non-experts defer to the opinion of experts, while the experts find themselves threatened by proposals which may challenge their authority and prestige, giving them an incentive to block change.

This situation is compounded by the anonymity accorded to reviewers which might lead easily to abuse. A reviewer ought to be willing to be identified and to defend his or her commentary on a research proposal or paper.

I have had a paper, and research proposals, rejected by experts; that is, by scientists whose own work would have been challenged.

I have had to agree to include a passage in another published paper in which I do not believe in order to accommodate an anonymous reviewer before he would agree to its publication.

This is becoming an unhealthy situation and one in which prominent scientists have to die before significant change becomes possible.

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